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PRESS RELEASE

**FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER THOMAS FINNERAN
PLEADS GUILTY TO OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE**

Boston, MA... The former Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives pleaded guilty today in federal court to obstructing justice by making false and misleading statements under oath before a panel of federal judges.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan and Sharon E. Ormsby, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in New England, announced today that **THOMAS M. FINNERAN**, age 56, of 7 Countryside Drive in Mattapan, Massachusetts, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard G. Stearns to one count of obstruction of justice in that he corruptly endeavored to influence, obstruct and impede the due administration of justice by knowingly and willfully making misleading and false statements under oath before the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts on November 14, 2003. Immediately after accepting the guilty plea, Judge Stearns sentenced **FINNERAN** to 1 year and 6 months of probation, and a \$25,000 fine. In addition, according to a plea agreement with the government, **FINNERAN** has agreed not to run or hold public office for five years.

“When elected representatives or a member of the bar testifies falsely and obstructs justice, it is not only a violation of the public’s trust, it undermines the integrity of our judicial process,” stated U.S. Attorney Sullivan. “The public places extraordinary trust in those it gives the greatest authority and with that authority comes the obligation to act with fairness and honesty. Mr. Finneran violated that trust, not in a routine political matter, but in a matter of grave importance, redistricting and voting rights.”

FINNERAN, who resigned his position as Speaker of the House several months after the federal investigation commenced, was indicted on perjury and obstruction of justice charges on June 6, 2005. Today, **FINNERAN** admitted to one of those charges - that he corruptly endeavored to influence the federal court during his sworn trial testimony on November 14, 2003.

FINNERAN was a witness in a federal Voting Rights Act case brought by the Black Political Task Force and other minority plaintiffs from the City of Boston against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. That lawsuit alleged that the 2001 state statute which drew

new legislative district boundaries discriminated against black and minority voters in Boston and deprived them of an equal opportunity to vote. In particular, the lawsuit alleged that **FINNERAN** and other legislators engaged in “racial gerrymandering” to protect incumbent legislators. **FINNERAN**’s own legislative district, the 12th Suffolk District, was at the heart of the lawsuit, and he was questioned at trial about his personal involvement in the development of the redistricting legislation.

FINNERAN pleaded guilty to obstructing justice when he testified falsely about whether he had seen or reviewed a redistricting plan before the Joint Special Committee on Redistricting and Reapportionment had filed its report on October 18, 2001. At today’s hearing, the prosecutor told the Court that **FINNERAN** met with the House Chairman of the Committee, Thomas Petrolati, and others, and reviewed a redistricting plan for the entire state including his own district. The prosecutor also stated that **FINNERAN** had a series of other meetings and telephone calls with members of the House of Representatives, including the Committee Chairman, in the weeks leading up to the filing of the Committee plan, and that he reviewed and discussed redistricting plans for Springfield, Lowell, Worcester, and Newton, among others, between September 18, 2001 and October 17, 2001.

In February 2004, the three judge panel appointed by the First Circuit Court of Appeals to hear the minority plaintiffs’ Voting Rights Act and constitutional claims, ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The Court found, among other things, that the Massachusetts legislature had “sacrificed racial fairness to the voters on the altar of incumbency protection.” The Court also concluded that House members “use[d] race as a proxy in achieving incumbency protection,” in violation of the federal Voting Rights Act. **FINNERAN** was the Speaker of the House at the time the legislation was crafted and passed in 2001.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John T. McNeil and S. Theodore Merritt in Sullivan’s Public Corruption and Special Prosecutions Unit.

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